

**Bolsheviks-Leninists
(Poland)**

**ON 'JACOBIN
WAR'**

(IX 1940-V 1941)



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Translator's introduction

This document contains selection of articles published during WWII by the theoretical journal of Polish Trotskyists, pertaining to revolutionary tactics in conditions of imperialist war and fascist occupation.

Przegląd Marksistowski (Marxist Review), the underground theoretical-political journal of Bolsheviks-Leninists (as the Polish Trotskyist organization called itself), appeared in Nazi-occupied Warsaw in mid-1940. It was soon followed by *Czerwony Sztandar (Red Banner)* discussing current events. According to the list of the names printed in the latter paper at least 57 persons (either pseudonyms or initials) had paid by September 1941 had paid money to the publishing fund. Some of the sums came from the collections among the readers. Donations were noted from Warsaw, Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, Ł (probably Łódź) and an unknown place 'B'.

After WWII broke out, the Polish Trotskyists were cut off from their international contacts, and so were unaware of the discussions taking place in the 4th International. From a letter from abroad, which reached them at the start of 1940, they found out that Trotsky considered the defense of USSR as a duty, while condemning Stalinist policy. Apart from this, they received only the most general and vague information. This situation forced them to think independently about war-time tactics.

Only half of the 8 issues of *Marxist Review* survived. The Ringelblum Archive has three numbers (from 6 to 8), supplemented by number 4, kept in the National Archives in Cracow. Contents of all surviving issues were published by the Jewish Historical Institute¹. The articles below, representing original contributions to Marxist theory, are published in English for the first time.

1 <https://cbj.jhi.pl/documents/940239/>

Two Wars – Two Tactics

A Contribution to the Tactics of the Labor Movement in the Current War

Marxism does not condemn war as such, and it does not consider every war to be unjust or criminal. Wars and revolutions are an indispensable means for nations and classes to achieve national, class and imperialist goals. The proletariat makes its attitude to war dependent on its character and tendencies. Hence, Marxism finds itself in an inexorable struggle against a petty-bourgeois pacifism that condemns war "in general," whatever its content. Wars waged by colonial peoples for national liberation against imperialist oppressors are progressive and just wars, and it is the duty of the proletariat to support them morally and materially.

Marx and Engels viewed wars in the period of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions from this point of view. The wars that took place in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were mainly wars between feudal and capitalist forces for the suppression of feudalism and the creation of nation states. The bourgeois revolutions and the wars they waged against the united monarchical-feudal forces, as well as the wars fought for national reunification, crushed the machine of the feudal medievalism and cleared the way for the development of a higher form of production – capitalism. Revolutionary France of 1792-93 could only wage a revolutionary and victorious war against feudal Europe, because having dealt on an unprecedented scale with the French feudal lords and their supporters, established a republic, performed military "miracles", liberating the energy and heroism of the masses thanks to the establishment of the dictatorship of the most oppressed classes of society at that time and the application of revolutionary terror against the internal enemy during the war. This example of Jacobin war is a fact of great importance to us: when the people want to defend their right to political existence, their gains against a reactionary invasion from outside, they must seize power. Fight and victory over the internal enemy opens the way to the defeat of the external enemy.

On the boundary of national-progressive and imperialist-reactionary wars lies the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71. For Prussia, this war was progressive in so far as it was turned against France, which sustained the feudal fragmentation of Germany and stood in the way of their national unification. But its historically progressive content was exhausted with the overthrow of Napoleon III and the establishment of a republic in France. At that moment, the progressive war against France turned into a plundering expedition (annexation of Alsace and Lorraine) and was then condemned by Marx and Engels, who sided with republican France.

After Germany's victory over France, German industry was rapidly expanding, and with it the labor movement. In Germany the world's first powerful socialist proletarian organizations are founded. During the period of emergency laws against socialists in 1890, social democracy won 1,5 million votes in the Reichstag elections. Germany becomes the center of the world labor movement. But at the same time, Russia is still the center of the world reaction. The defeated France allied itself with tsarism against Germany to avenge the defeat of 1870– [1871]. The labor movement faced a new situation. The military blocs were already essentially reactionary in nature. An imperialist "alliance of three" (Germany, Austria, Italy) was already taking shape on the European horizon against the imperialist "agreement of three" (France, Russia, England). In view of the imperialist nature of the blocs, the proletariat should have sought the military and social defeat of its own governments. But the blocs were not equally reactionary. Against Germany – the center of the labor movement – was raised the fist of the gendarme of Europe – Tsarist Russia – in which the labor movement was only in its infancy. Then Engels, faced with a specific situation, recommended to the German proletariat the tactic of Jacobin war – to fight against an external enemy, but at the same time against its own

bourgeoisie. Here is what Engels writes: "If, however, the French bourgeoisie starts such a war and, to this end, harnesses itself in the service of the Russian Tsar, who is also an enemy of the bourgeoisie of all Western Europe, it will be the cancellation of France's revolutionary mission. On the other hand, we German socialists... have a duty to keep the position we have gained in the vanguard of the labor movement not only against the internal but also the external enemy. If Russia wins – we will be crushed. So, to fight, when Russia starts a war, to fight the Russians and their allies, whoever it is! We have not forgotten the glorious example of the French of 1793 and if we are forced to do so, it may turn out that we will celebrate the hundred-year jubilee of 1793 by proving that the German workers of 1893 are not unworthy of the then sans-culottes“.

The Russo-Japanese War of 1905 revealed a new situation. It showed that tsarism was a colossus on clay legs, that the Russian labor movement had grown into a giant. Russia ceased to be the gendarme of Europe. Both blocks became equally reactionary. In both there was a powerful labor movement, objectively capable of delivering the killing blow to the bourgeoisie from within. In the face of the coming war, the labor movement developed a unified international tactic at the congresses of the Second International in Stuttgart 1907 and Basel 1912. The inte[r]nationalist tactic instructed the proletariat to use the difficulties that will arise in the course of the war in order to "rock the masses and hasten the breakdown of capitalism".

In the years 1914–15, Lenin, after analyzing the essence of the war, forged a revolutionary tactic for the proletariat – defeatism, which was an extension and improvement of the aforementioned resolutions. Lenin's defeatist theses are: "In a reactionary war, a revolutionary class must wish for defeat of its own government."

But it is not only about mere empty wishes: "Revolutionary activity against one's own government during the war undoubtedly and unquestionably means not only a wish for defeat, but an active contribution to causing it (emphasis by the editor)."

Lenin's tactics are intended to bring about a revolution in the belligerent states that would be unthinkable without their military defeat. Here is how Lenin put it: "A revolution during a war is a civil war, and the transformation of a war between governments into a civil war is facilitated by military defeats of the governments. Indeed, it is impossible to strive for such a transformation without thus contributing to the defeat (emphasis by the editor)".

During World War I, the slogan of defeatism was correct because 1) in all the belligerent countries a powerful labor movement was capable to overthrow its own bourgeoisie, and 2) both blocs were equally reactionary and their military strength was almost equal. In this state of affairs, the use of the tactics of defeatism by the proletariat, which was intended to lead to revolution in the case of defeat of one of the partners, did not imply the complete occupation and destruction of the labor movement in the defeated country. As a result of the defeat of Germany, there was no occupation of Germany, but a revolution in Germany, with the defeat of the tsarist regime came the Russian revolution, not the occupation of Russia by Germany.

Hitler's rise to power in 1933, his defeat of the German labor movement, the swift abolition of the Treaty of Versailles, and the planned war economy present Europe and the labor movement with a new situation. Fascist imperialism builds up the world's most powerful militarism and portrays itself as gendarme of Europe. It occupies the Rhineland, Austria and the Sudetes with the passive attitude of Western European states, entangled in their own contradictions. The latter are afraid of the

growth of German power, but unprepared for war, they passively observe his [s] "peaceful" achievements and try to direct his expansion towards the USSR.

After the outbreak of the war, it turned out that out of two blocks, the imperialist-democratic and the fascist, unequally reactionary, the fascist bloc was prepared for the war and the Allied states were powerless against its victorious march. The pogrom of European states resulted in the collapse of the labor movement that existed in them. Therefore, the present war requires a different tactic from the proletariat than the war of 1914–18.

Even before the war, the labor movement in Europe had to change the revolutionary tactics towards the Nazi campaign to join the German territories to the Reich (Saar, Austria, Sudetes). The labor movement, regardless of the national moment, preferred national oppression and separatism to national "freedom" under Hitler's whip.

During the war, the policy of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is a continuation of a peace policy, but through means of violence. Just as the main enemy of the labor movement in peacetime was fascism, as a national and international phenomenon, likewise, along with its "national" versions in various countries, it remained so during the war. To achieve its goal – the overthrow of capitalism – the proletariat must continue its peace policy – the anti-fascist struggle – but by means of violence, that is, to use revolutionary defeatism in the Axis countries and the tactics of Jacobin war in the Allied countries.

Our opponents could put forward as formally correct the Lenin's thesis that there is no revolution without defeat, but a defeat in war is not always a guarantee of revolution, and in certain situations a military defeat of one's own country must inevitably lead to the collapse of the labor movement of that country. Such a situation arose in Czechoslovakia in September 1938 and in Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and France during the present war. The proletariat, therefore, need not contribute to their defeat, which will bring the downfall of the labor movement, but need to use the objective defeat "in order to rock the masses and hasten the breakdown of capitalism".

Lenin took the defeatist position only in a specific situation: "Whoever wants to seriously reject the slogan of defeat of his own government in the imperialist war would have to point to one of these three factors: 1) that the war of 1914–15 is not reactionary, 2) that a revolution in connection with it is impossible, or 3) that mutual aid and cooperation in all belligerent countries is impossible for the revolutionary movement"(emphasis by the editor).

The latter condition is currently lacking in the Axis countries, where the labor movement is crushed.

Faced with the emergence of the new situation, the proletariat, following the example of the Paris Commune of 1871, must wrest the power from the hands of bourgeoisie, that betrays national interests and is incapable of war against fascism, in order to wage a revolutionary war against the fascist aggressor in the name of national interests and its own social interests. The experience of the present war has clearly shown that only Hitler can be victorious in the long run, and that his triumph would open the era of fascism in Europe. The victory of England, on the other hand, could be achieved at the cost of such enormous sacrifices that it would inevitably bring about a social [and] political defeat for the bourgeoisie and would open an epoch of revolution. In keeping with the spirit of Leninism, defeatism cannot therefore be recommended in the Allied countries.

The social-imperialists of the Allied countries are opponents of both defeatism and Jacobin war, and supporters of cooperation with the bourgeoisie. They subordinate the class interests of the

proletariat to it. Leaving the means of production in the hands of the bourgeoisie, they prolong the working day, impose compulsory arbitration on the workers. They limit the democratic rights of the people and bestow providential bourgeois men with dictatorial powers. These agents of Allied imperialism praise its "humanitarianism", sanctify the colonial robbery, and in the imperialist war with Germany they see only the war of democracy against fascism, progress against barbarism. They sic on the German people, threaten them with revenge for Hitler and with partition. Their remedies against Nazism were tried with known success in the German tragedy of 1933. To save the labor movement from National Socialism, they allied themselves with the democracy of Brüning and Hindenburg and paved the way for Hitlerism. Currently, to block Hitler's path to Europe, they allied themselves with "their" Brünings and Hindenburgs - Weygands, Pétains, Churchills, Beneses and Sikorskis. The tragic result of this tactic was recently revealed by the capitulation of France. For defense against Hitler, the French proletariat was subordinated by the socialist party to the general staff, which in turn turned it over to Hitler. The SFIO (Léon Blum's party) - the advocate of the view that class struggle undermines the country's defense against fascism - is co-responsible for national treason of France. Likewise, Attlee, in an alliance with Churchill, "protects" the English proletariat from Hitler.

Similarly, the social-imperialist position was pushed with much more audacity by the Comintern agents of Stalin during the honeymoon period of the USSR with the League of Nations. This ended, of course, with the conclusion of the non-aggression pact between the USSR and Germany. On Stalin's orders, his agents in democratic countries immediately abandon their patriotic stance and don the garments of "defeatist" pacifism. Stalin's cooperation with Hitler deepened more and more. Its result are the territorial gains of the USSR. The Cominternites approve of this cooperation and support the new territorial order established by Hitler. After each Hitler's success, they pick up on his "peace" proposals and recommend them as a Leninist anti-war tactic. Their "defeatism" is a Nazi diversion in the Allied countries. For the sake of propaganda of Hitler's "peace", Stalin's agents use the legitimate hatred of the masses for imperialist war. In the years 1928-32 they contributed to Hitler's seizure of power through their adventurist ultra-left policies. Currently, they facilitate his expansion on a European scale. They dare to obscure this shameful and treacherous pro-Nazi policy with the authority of Lenin.

The tactic of Jacobin war does not weaken the intensity of the class struggle - conversely, it is unthinkable without a civil war against the internal enemy. On the other hand, the tactic of Jacobin war does not weaken the country's defense power - on the contrary, it strengthens it and creates the conditions for a victory over fascism. Only the proletariat, by contrasting its ideology and revolutionary dynamism with the fascist deception and the hypocrisy of imperialist "democracy", can wage a sincere and honest war under the slogan "for our freedom and yours", smash the Hitlerite army, bring about a revolution in Germany and the collapse of fascism and capitalism in Europe.

[Published in Przegląd Marksistowski, no. 4 from September 1940.]

WAR ON WAR OR JACOBIN WAR?

*Below we publish a discussion article sent to us.
In the article that follows, we express the editorial staff's position.*

The author of the article "The imperialist war and proletarian internationalism" (Marx[ist] Rev[iew], No. 5), analyzing the situation, concludes that in the present war the proletariat should use the tactic of Jacobin war instead of defeatism. He also quotes Engels, who in 1892 recommended Jacobin war to Germany in the event of a joint attack by tsarism and France. In the rest of the article, the author shows the inconsistency of Rosa Luxemburg, who recommended the same tactics to Germany during the previous world war. Finally, he concludes that during the same period Lenin didn't adopt a position of Jacobin war, but of defeatism. And nothing more.

I don't understand anything of this. According to the author, what's a Jacobin war and who is to lead it? The question concerns both the present war and the Germany of Engels' time.

Regardless of the explanations I expect the editors will give me and all readers for whom these matters are also unclear, allow me to express my views.

The tactic of Jacobin war comes historically from the Great French Revolution. It is therefore – in my opinion – a war of the popular masses, led by revolutionary representatives, against both internal and external reaction. The popular masses can wage such a war only when the old state military apparatus of the ruling classes has ceased to exist or when a new revolutionary power has arisen alongside the old apparatus.

After all, it is known that in Germany during Engels' time the Kaiser's bourgeois-landlord government was in power. How, then, was Germany at that time to conduct Jacobin war? And by whom? By the Kaiser maybe?

Engels' advice is completely incomprehensible without some explanation. The author of the article probably knows that Engels at that time considered it possible for the social democracy to take power peacefully. He believed that in the face of danger, the popular masses would force the bourgeoisie to hand over power to the socialists who would then conduct Jacobin war.

In the years 1914–15, Lenin rejected the slogan of Jacobin war, as in practice it was a fiction. Power was in the hands of the imperialist bourgeoisie. To be able to take it away from the latter, it was necessary to show the masses that the bourgeoisie was incapable of defending the interests of the people. By raising the slogan "war on war", Lenin recommended defeatism to revolutionary parties as the only form of struggle against war and their own bourgeoisie. Defeatism means sabotage of all activities of the bourgeoisie, both at the rear and at the front. It is a form of the revolutionary proletariat's struggle against war and its own bourgeoisie, and as such it depends on the intensity of the class struggle. The present war is – like the war of 1914–18 – an imperialist and therefore a reactionary war. How is the proletariat to respond to it? The author of the article does not concretely solve this question. Should one fight alongside English imperialism? – No – Does one use defeatist tactics? Also no. For there is no Leninist condition of "coordination and cooperation of the revolutionary movement in all belligerent countries." So there remains Jacobin war, that is, wishful thinking. How is the English proletariat to conduct this war? Will Churchill allow it? Was there coordination and cooperation between the revolutionary movement of belligerent countries in 1914–18? – No. The chauvinists pushed the masses to a fratricidal slaughter. There was no revolutionary party. Only Lenin's small group existed in Russia.

In Germany, only 4 leaders spoke out against the war. In other countries it was not better. Everywhere the masses were obeying the social-chauvinists. There was no coordination and cooperation between the masses and parties. Insofar as Lenin speaks of coordination and cooperation, he is referring to the possibility of it, not the fact of it. And such a possibility could arise in 1914–18 only after the collapse of state military apparatuses. Was there any cooperation between the German labor movement and the revolutionary proletariat of Russia in January 1918 during the Brest peace negotiations? No, but it was established in November, after the outbreak of the German revolution. And now, does the author really see no possibility of cooperation with the German proletariat after the collapse of the fascist military apparatus? Lenin spoke of defeatism in the following words: "We are defeatists, we take the position of defeat for our own government, not for the enemy to win, but to show the masses that the bourgeoisie is unable to stand up for the interests of the people and then seize power using the defeat of the bourgeoisie." We consider the enemy's victory to be the ultimate evil, but there is no other way out. Defeatism, therefore, does not mean (? - ed.) striving for the defeat of one's own government at any cost. So is it not better to replace the meaningless slogan of Jacobin war with the slogan "war on war", and to adjust defeatism as a form of revolutionary struggle to the requirements of the present situation? The author of the article himself does not feel confident enough in this matter. So he stands on the position of defeatism in the colonies. The question is, are we currently having two different wars, or is there one war in different parts of the world? Isn't the war in Europe the same as in Africa? Doesn't the defeat of British imperialism as a result of the revolutionary movements and victories of Italy mean a reduction in combat capacity in Europe? Wouldn't Italy then suppress these revolutionary movements, having after all, as a European power, a military advantage over the non-industrialized African peoples? But perhaps the author had in mind the fortunate coincidence when both imperialisms would collapse simultaneously. However, this is unlikely. Despite this, the author is an advocate of defeatism in the colonial war. So why does he disagree with defeatism in Europe? The war in Europe is the same imperialist war in which the same belligerent blocs are engaged. I agree with the author that defeatism is right in Africa. It is incomprehensible, however, why defeatism has lost its *raison d'être* in relation to the European continent? Just as it is the duty of a revolutionary to carry out revolutionary work under all circumstances, so it is the duty of a revolutionary party to promote the slogan of fighting against war and to use the tactics of defeatism where possible. We are striving for the defeat of England through the defeat of Germany. The awareness of this goal must penetrate the masses with all force. And this is strictly dependent on the concrete slogans we raise.

Zed.

[Published in Przegląd Marksistowski, no. 6 from February-March 1941.]

“WAR ON WAR”, THAT IS, “A JACOBIN WAR”

We will try to explain in the most accessible way to Comrade Zed and all readers who criticize the concept of Jacobin war from a revolutionary point of view, its meaning and significance.

There is a well-known saying of the great war theorist Clausewitz, often quoted by Lenin, that war is a continuation of the peace policy – by different means. These words are equally applicable to the politics of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat. The war policy of the proletariat is based essentially on the same premises as its peace policy. In peacetime, on the front lines of the internal class struggle, the revolutionary attitude of the proletariat towards the propertied classes and their rule is generally defeatist: the proletariat of each country should strive for the defeat of its own bourgeoisie. For a Marxist, this is an axiom which requires no further explanation.

The imperialist war is the greatest crime committed by the bourgeoisie against humanity. By continuing the old defeatist policy toward bourgeois governments, the proletariat should pursue their military defeat in a reactionary war.

The present war is an imperialist war from both the Axis and England and her former allies. This is most evident in the colonial section of this war. Democratic England fights in Africa for the same goals as fascist Germany and Italy. From the point of view of the international revolution, it does not matter whether Libya, Cyrenaica and Kenya will continue to be robbed by the Italian Empire or plundered by English imperialism. The peoples of these countries also do not care. They want to get rid of their oppressor, but by no means long for a new one. The proletariat of both Italy and England should support the righteous cause of these peoples, should prevent their "own" bourgeoisie from committing a murderous massacre in the interests of a handful of capitalists. So it should strive for the military defeat of his "own" government. At this point, Comrade Zed says: I agree on defeatism in Africa. But why do you reject defeatism in Europe? “Are we currently having two different wars, or is there one war in different parts of the world? Isn't the war in Europe the same as in Africa?”

The war in Europe is and is not the same war as in Africa. From the point of view of the belligerent imperialist blocs, the war is one and indivisible. From the point of view of the proletariat, these are two wars. Great Britain is fighting with Germany and Italy for a new imperialist division of the world. But at the same time, the English bourgeoisie defends the island against Germany, against fascist Germany. Had Hitler captured the island, the English bourgeoisie would have lost much, the proletariat would have lost everything. The English labor movement would cease to exist for a long period of time. Regardless of the further course of the war on the oceans and other continents, fascism would reign in Europe. Of course, the English government is not fighting with the Hitlerite ideology and regime, but with a dangerous imperialist competitor. But by fighting it to defend its own class interests, it protects at the same time, against its will, the labor movement from extinction. Under these conditions, is the proletariat to seek a military defeat of its own government on this section of the front?

The revolutionary proletariat sought to overthrow the Brüning government in Germany. Did it mean that he should have striven for Brüning's defeat when he opposed the onslaught of Hitlerism? Did the rev[olutionary] Marxists "back" the Severing government by calling for a boycott of the Hitlerite plebiscite against it? Did they not stigmatize the Stalinists for their disgraceful participation in this plebiscite? - The revolutionary proletariat of Spain sought to overthrow the Caballero and the rule of Negrín. Didn't he still fight in the front ranks against General Franco?

As long as the English bourgeoisie defends the country from the invasion of Hitlerite Germany, the proletariat must not disturb it. The proletariat cannot, however, limit its tasks to "not disturbing" the bourgeoisie and fulfilling its military duty under its command. Because it is the command that cannot arrange a victory. Hitlerite Germany must be opposed by a European revolution that would break its internal front. The imperialist war must be turned into a revolutionary war, into "a war of the popular masses – as Comrade Zed rightly says – led by revolutionary representatives, against both internal and external reaction", that is, Jacobin war.

But how is the English proletariat to wage this war? - asks Comrade Zed - "Will Churchill allow it?" - Churchill certainly will not allow it. Only a revolutionary proletarian government will be able to wage Jacobin war. (Comrade Zed is wrong if he thinks that Jacobin war can be waged under a system of dual power). We therefore argue that the English proletariat must first of all oust Churchill and gain power in order to be able to wage Jacobin war. But in the struggle for power, he cannot, in the present conditions, write on his banner the slogan of a general military defeat of the government, but must combine the slogan of defeat in the colonial robberies of his "own" imperialism with the slogan of the Jacobin war, that is, the revolutionary defense of the island against Hitler.

Some Comrades use some of the same arguments as Comrade Zed to reach quite the opposite conclusions. They, too, believe that the war in Africa and Europe is the same war, that a defeat in Africa "would mean a reduction in England's combat capacity in Europe," and therefore they are opposed to defeatism in Africa.

The source of the error is the same in both cases. To view war from the point of view of governments, not of nations fighting against governments. The "defeatist" Zed maintains that a defeat of imperialism in Africa would be tantamount to a victory for Italy. There can be no question of the victory of the national revolutionary movement, because the Italians will stifle it with their "military advantage". And a simultaneous collapse of both imperialisms "is unlikely."

Comrade Zed does not realize that his arguments do not speak for defeatism in Europe, but for throwing it out of the sphere of proletarian tactics in general. Our task can hardly be to contribute to the victory of one imperialism over the other. Besides, Comrade Zed discredited not only the idea of defeatism but the idea of revolution in general with one stroke of the pen. After all, the bourgeoisie also has a "military advantage" over the European proletariat.

Fortunately, Comrade Zed's argumentation is false. That is why the view of opponents of defeatism in the colonial war is also wrong.

The defeat of English imperialism in Africa could, but didn't have to, lead to a victory for Italian imperialism. For a victory for national liberation movements is also possible. The advantage in weaponry is not an independent factor, because weapons are in the hands of the people, in the hands of uniformed workers and peasants, who tomorrow may direct these weapons against their officers and their bourgeoisie. A national liberation revolution in the colonies would stir many hundreds of millions of masses and lead to the defeat of world imperialism. Conversely, the defeat of any imperialist state in the colonies opens the way to revolution. It does not have to break out in this country where the war is taking place. The defeat of English imperialism in Egypt could spark a revolution in India, from which it would spread like wildfire to all the colonies of the world. It is not known in which country the new cycle of the world revolution will begin. But in every country the proletariat should employ such tactics as to lead it to victory. When fighting the internal enemy, one must not forget about an even more dangerous external enemy. In colonies, on the other hand,

there is no enemy more dangerous than the imperialism of the metropolis, with which the darkest forces of internal reaction are allied. Even if Hitler had won a victory over England, but at the same time the English and other colonies had liberated themselves and became independent, Germany's victory would have turned out to be a Pyrrhic one. A new war with the revolutionary colonial cauldron would have devoured all of Germany's strength.

Comrade Zed writes that "defeatism means sabotage of all activities of the bourgeoisie, both at the rear and at the front." This formula is quite unfortunate. As far as political sabotage is concerned, it should be remembered that the proletariat is capable of sabotaging "all activities" of the bourgeoisie only in a directly revolutionary situation, and defeatism is to be used precisely in order to create such a situation. As far as military sabotage is concerned, such as blowing up bridges, dismantling railroad tracks, etc., Lenin himself clearly made reservations against such an understanding of defeatist tactics. Only in exceptional cases, during a direct insurgent struggle for power, may the proletariat use sabotage against the state apparatus as a weapon of the class struggle. This applies to both peace and war times. The Marxist party mobilizes the masses for political action, but does not perform the subversive tasks of enemy intelligence. Defeatism is not a special form of struggle. It is the "normal" continuation of the class struggle under conditions of a reactionary war. Thus, the tactical arsenal of defeatism includes both fighting in the parliamentary arena, as well as mobilizing the masses for extra-parliamentary action by issuing legal and illegal magazines, organizing rallies, strikes and demonstrations, educating soldiers, calling upon them to fraternize in the trenches, etc.

Taking the position of Jacobin war, we will of course not be calling upon the English soldiers to fraternize with the German ones, but to fight them. We will not take any steps at all that could weaken the country's defense force. This does not mean that we should give up class struggle. Depending on the goal that a workers' party sets itself, class struggle can paralyze the defense force or, on the contrary, strengthen it. When the proletariat consciously takes on the task of defending the country, the revolutionary class struggle is the most effective weapon [in] this defense. Turning imperialist war into civil war and turning imperialist war into revolutionary war against external enemy are not mutually exclusive but complementary goals.

In the article criticized by Comrade Zed, we quoted Lenin's words that the opponents of the defeatist slogan would be right if they could prove, among other things, that coordination and cooperation of the revolutionary movement in all belligerent countries is impossible.

Comrade Zed forces an already open door by insisting that Lenin was referring "only to the possibility, not the fact" of international coordination of cooperation. On the assumption of the possibility of international anti-war action, Lenin urged the workers of all belligerent countries to turn these opportunities into deeds by seeking the defeat of their own governments.

Comrade Zed, allegedly agreeing with Lenin, however, declares that there was no international revolutionary coordination and cooperation during the 1914-18 war. In fact, there were even no possibilities of such cooperation, because they only appeared "after the collapse of state military apparatuses". Was it in March 1917? - No, only in November 1918!

Comrade Zed needs these arguments, contradicting all logic and obvious facts, in order to: "be able to show that the present situation does not differ in any way from the situation during the previous world war".

How was it in reality?

Writing about the possibilities of international anti-war action, Lenin made a reservation that he did not mean a formal agreement, but actual revolutionary activity in individual countries. Soon it turned out that formal "coordination and cooperation" is also possible (international conferences in Zimmerwald, Bern, youth conference in Kient[h]al). It was decisive for Lenin, however, that in all belligerent countries the proletariat could, if it wished, oppose the bourgeoisie and war. For in all the leading countries engaged in the war there was a strong labor movement, but it was paralyzed by internal treason.

Comrade Zed distorted the image of the labor movement during the 1914–18 war. "Only Lenin's small group – we learn – existed in Russia; in Germany, only 4 leaders spoke out against the war," besides that, social-chauvinism and nothing else.

Fortunately it was not that bad, although it was very bad. Although there were few consistent defeatists – even in Russia, among the leading Bolshevik circles – there was nevertheless a Bolshevik party, deeply rooted [*word unclear*], and it carried out internationalist activity. The Bolshevik faction in the State Duma had 5 members. Even the Menshevik deputies did not vote for war credits. The anti-war activity continued in other countries as well. The Socialist Party of Serbia has remained loyal to socialism. Its parliamentary deputies voted against war credits. The Socialist Party of Bulgaria, the British Socialist Party and the Socialist Party of Italy, which in 1917 had 30,000 members, flowed against the tide of social-chauvinism, SDKPiL and PPS-Left fought against all war currents of Polish nationalism and social-patriotism. And what was happening in Germany?

At the beginning of the war, only Liebknecht alone had the courage to vote against war credits and only three party members with known names – Rosa Luxembourgh, Klara Zetkin and Franz Mehring dared to publicly protest against the disgrace of August 4th. But over time a dozen or so socialist deputies voted against war credits and the alleged intra-party uniformity broke down irretrievably. In 1916, the Independent Social Democratic Party was established, which, despite all the opportunism and masked social-chauvinism of its leaders, expressed the dissatisfaction of the masses with the policy of the official party.

A known and consistent expression of the revolutionary moods of the vanguard of the German proletariat was the Spartacus League, which throughout the entire war carried out intensively illegal internationalist activity. On May 1st, 1916, at Potsdam Square in Berlin under leadership of Karl Liebknecht, 10,000 workers and soldiers demonstrated against the government and against the war. In January 1918 – since Comrade Zed mentions this date – a mass strike broke out in Germany and Austria, heralding the upcoming revolution.

Such was the case during the war of 1914-18. And now? – Currently, only in England (before that in Poland, France, etc.) there is a strong labor movement with huge revolutionary possibilities, not used due to internal treason. In Germany and Italy, on the other hand, there is as yet no possibility of mass revolutionary action, no mass labor movement at all.

Instead of thinking about this fact of decisive significance for determining our war tactic, Comrade Zed asks us a deep question, whether we do not see the possibility of cooperation with the German proletariat "after the collapse of the fascist military apparatus".

Having passed through all the difficulties and complexities of yesterday and today, Comrade Zed looks back at the distant past. How could Engels recommend to the German proletariat in 1892 the

tactics of Jacobin war? After all, Germany was then not ruled by the working class, but by the Kaiser's bourgeois-landlord government.

Comrade Zed provides us with some highly valuable explanations in this matter. It turns out that "Engels at that time considered it possible for the social democracy to take power peacefully."

We humbly admit that we did not know anything about it until now. We are not contrarian enough to ignore this information.

Neither "at that time", nor before or after, did Engels consider it possible for the German social democracy to seize power [sic]. Marx and Engels did not rule out the possibility of peaceful development towards socialism in countries with a republican political system or with a very high degree of liberty. In relation to Germany, they never allowed such a possibility.

After this little digression, let's come back to our main topic. Comrade Zed tries to act the role of an unwavering defeatist. We will soon find out that, despite all appearances, Comrade Zed "does not feel confident enough in this role". "One should – he writes – use the tactics of defeatism where possible." Such words sound very "suspicious". But it doesn't stop there. In the following sentence he says: "We are striving for the defeat of England through the defeat of Germany." "We don't understand anything of this"! If the proletariat of England is to seek the defeat of its own government through the defeat of Germany, it must contribute to the defeat of Germany. So there is no longer a question of defeatism, but of... Jacobin war. Was it worth it to fight in defense of indivisible defeatism to end up with "wishful thinking" about Jacobin war?...

Comrade Zed advises us despite it all to replace the slogan of Jacobin war with the slogan "war on war." Apparently, he feels animated by certain words, but one can do nothing about that.

As for us, we have never renounced the old, absolutely correct slogan: war against imperialist war. We reject the alternative "war on war or Jacobin war" as completely pointless. Our slogan is: down with the imperialist war, long live the Jacobin war!

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MAY DAY 1941

Comrades, workers!

The second war-time May Day is approaching. The world is going through a unique and unparalleled period. The gigantic contest of imperialist titans for world domination shake the lands and seas with paroxysms of unprecedented cataclysm. Humanity is basking in blood. The hurricane of war unleashed by capitalism is wreaking terrible destruction, turning Europe into a hotbed of hunger, pestilence and disease.

Hitler's armies, which have been victorious so far, are bringing the most monstrous slavery of fascism to the peoples of Europe, crushing, together with the socialist labor movement, national independence, all democratic freedoms and human culture. If Hitler had won the present war, Europe would be an arena of total barbarism.

That is why the working class has written on its banners the slogan of *war against Hitler until victory!*

But the war is not waged by the working class, but by capitalist England and its allies. Great Britain, enslaving hundreds of millions of colonial slaves, the United States, where still blacks are lynched, the government of Greece, which suppressed all freedom in its own country, and the emigre "governments", among which the Polish "government" of Endeks² and Sanators³ occupy a prominent place, assure that they fight for democracy, for the rights and freedom of nations. *They lie!* They fight only for the imperialist "right" to subdue foreign peoples and to exploit the working masses of their own nations. Hitler, the conqueror of the German labor movement, is the hero of their dreams. They hate him because he has become their own vanquisher. And it became one because they did not want a war with the Third Reich and did not prepare for this war. Until the last moment, they believed that they would manage to direct Hitler's expansion towards the East – against the USSR. And when Hitler, without giving up his anti-Soviet plans, decided to attack the Western countries first of all (the war with Poland was only an episode in his great strategic game), the effects of the "Munich" policy revealed themselves in all their tragic fullness...

Each subsequent day of the war confirms that the decrepit and rotten bourgeois democracy is incapable of defeating the German counter-revolution. Hitler will not be defeated until the internal front of Germany collapses, until Germany finds itself in flames of proletarian revolution.

The emergence of a mass revolutionary movement in Germany is possible either as a result of a series of severe military defeats or as a result of an external revolutionary stimulus.

The English proletariat must put its revolutionary act on the scales. It must overthrow its internal enemy, conquer power, liberate itself and *turn the imperialist war into an anti-fascist war*. The proletarian revolution in England, bringing freedom to the colonial peoples and proclaiming socialist brotherhood to the German people, would be the beginning of the end for Hitler.

2 Supporters of reactionary National Democracy (*Endecja*) movement. Since its beginnings in the second half of the 19th century it was virulently nationalistic and violently anti-Semitic. In 1930s elements of *Endecja* evolved toward Nazi-style fascism. Near the end of WWII the armed wing of *Endecja*, National Armed Forces (*Narodowe Siły Zbrojne, NSZ*), engaged in collaboration with the Nazis. [Translator's note.]

3 Supporters of the authoritarian Sanation (*Sanacja*) regime. The regime came to power after a military coup d'état in May 1926 ('The May Coup'). Sanation rule was characterized by limitation of democratic liberties and political repression. In 1930s elements of Sanation movement began to adapt anti-Semitic and totalitarian political positions. [Translator's note.]

The proletariat of England has not yet embarked on a revolutionary path. The leaders of the Labor Party harnessed him to the chariot of "their" bourgeoisie, "their" imperialism. They promise the working class a socialist paradise – after the war. If, however, the proletariat of England does not overthrow the capitalist system now, during the war, it may end – in the hell of fascism.

While the Second International is organizing a war of "democratic", and not only "democratic", imperialism against its German, Italian and Japanese competitors, the Third International has become an agent of fascism.

Stalin's pact with Hitler of August 1939 is the most atrocious crime a workers party has ever committed against the proletariat. Hitler's victories in the present war were largely conditioned by this pact. Stalin drips not only with the blood of those murdered by himself

[words missing] revolution and creators [words missing]

[words missing] responsible for bloody acts of his [words missing] bestiality of fascism.

[words missing] [i]s disastrous not only for the interna [words missing]

[words missing] [S]oviets. It's a repetition on a grand sca[le] [words missing]

[words missing] Brcka [sic]. Its "peaceful" successes are crumbs from the tab[le]

[words missing] But by giving up scraps in the meantime, Hitler, strengthened [thanks to] Stalin's policy, did not renounce his plan to conquer the whole—the USSR.

Before our eyes, here in Poland, the Germans are making feverish [and] energetic preparations for an armed destruction of the "allied" Soviet state.

The Polish proletariat does not expect its liberation from Stalin's hands. We do not want Stalinist "freedom", we do not want incorporation into *today's USSR*, which is a prison for all its nations and a concentration camp for revolutionaries. We fight for an *independent* Soviet Poland, which of its own free will will take its rightful place in the great family of the united European socialist republics.

Nevertheless, when the hour of war between Germany and the USSR strikes, the workers and peasants of Poland *will stand as one on the side of the Soviets*. Because the Soviets are not only Stalin and his hangmen. The Soviet bureaucracy betrayed and dishonored the Russian Revolution, but until private property was restored in the USSR, it remains a workers state, and its defense is an elementary duty of every conscious worker.

Comrades, workers! Polish proletariat experiences this year's May Day in conditions of captivity unknown in the history of civilized mankind. On May Day, we will not forget about those who, in the course of 21 years, prepared the ground for the September catastrophe. These criminals have not yet stepped down from the scene. At home and abroad, they raise their heads higher and higher and with more and more audacity. They dream of the Polish "democracy" of Chjeno-Piast⁴ or "elitism"

4 A right-wing political coalition formed in 1923 and 1926. It was a merger of the Christian Association of National Unity (*Chrześcijański Związek Jedności Narodowej*, ChZJN; a coalition of nationalist and Christian democratic parties) and Polish People's Party "Piast" (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe "Piast"*, PSL "Piast"; a right-wing peasant

of Sanacja. They dream of a Poland of capitalist exploitation, poverty and lawlessness or bureaucratic arbitrariness, national oppression, imperialist plunder, anti-Semitic pogroms. They dream about the resurrection of Poland—from before the September. The Polish bourgeoisie makes its counter-revolutionary preparations ahead of time. Will it find the Polish proletariat unprepared, as in 1918?

In any case, the PPS is doing everything to make it happen. In independent Poland, it subordinated the interests of the proletariat to the interests of the state, that is, capitalists and landlords. It was the surest way to—lose independence. Today in captivity, the PPS continues to betray the workers' cause in the interests of the future bourgeois state. The most glaring external symptom of this shameful betrayal is the participation of the PPS in Sikorski's "government" in exile, their partnership with Endeks and Sanators.

Comrades! Were it not for the politics of reformism and Stalinism of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals, the world would not be basking in the blood of imperialist war today, and Europe would not be overrun by the modern Huns and Vandals. The lack of a Marxist party, the lack of revolutionary leadership is the cause of the catastrophe we are experiencing. To prepare for tomorrow's victory, the foundations of the New Party, the Fourth International, must already be laid today.

Comrades, workers! On May Day, 1941, we will not count our ranks, we will not raise our red banners on city squares and streets, we will not demonstrate our strength and will to fight with a general strike. But even this year, under the conditions of the most terrible terror, we must celebrate the day of our revolutionary workers' holiday. Depending on local conditions, and obeying the precepts of conspiracy, workers should decide on the form of the demonstration themselves, either by stopping work, perhaps for a few minutes, or by illegal group meetings.

Comrades! On May Dy, we will make an oath that we will not rest in the fight against the fascist occupier and the native bourgeoisie until we achieve victory.

Down with the imperialist war! Long live the civil war against the bourgeoisie! Long live the revolutionary war against Hitler!

Down with capitalism! Down with every bourgeois power! Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat!

Long live the Polish Independent Soviet Republic! Long live the United Socialist Republics of Europe and the World!

Long live the Fourth International! Long live socialism! Long live May Day!

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party). Because of its acronym ChZJN was nicknamed by its opponents as "Chjena" (pun on *hiena* – 'hyeana' in Polish). Chjeno-Piast was a political base for two governments of Wincenty Witos (leader of PSL "Piast") – in 1923 and in 1926 – both of them unpopular. In 1923 Witos cabinet collapsed after couple months as a result of political blowback after a workers' uprising in Cracow. In 1926 Chjeno-Piast government was overthrown in the May Coup. *[Translator's note.]*

ONCE MORE ON DEFEATISM AND JACOBIN WAR

Until the outbreak of the present war, and even during its duration, our movement regarded revolutionary defeatism as the only correct slogan for all capitalist countries. Quite late, because only during the French campaign, we rejected defeatism for the countries fighting Hitler and his allies, proposing the concept of "Jacobin war". In "The Marxist Review" from January this year, we made a modification to the slogan of Jacobin War, declaring that it did not apply either to a colonial war or the possible war between the United States and Japan. In both of these cases, according to this concept, the slogan of rev[olutionary] defeatism should continue to apply. This position was justified as follows: In the colonial war, both imperialisms, "democratic" and fascist, represent reactionary interests in an equal measure. Colonial peoples do not care who will rob them: "democracy" or European fascism. Their greatest enemy is the directly oppressing imperialism. They should strive for its defeat, because the defeat of imperialism opens the way for national and social liberation. The colonial revolution can become a powerful stimulus for the European revolution. Liberated colonial peoples will voluntarily join the European proletariat in a common revolutionary war against fascism. Since the European proletariat is obliged to support the revolutionary movement in the colonies, it should thus strive for the defeat of its own, even "democratic" imperialism in the colonial part of the war. [War] of the US against Japan meanwhile will be fought solely for the imperialist interests of capitalism of both countries. Mikado is not Hitler. He does not threaten the class and national interests of the American proletariat. The US proletariat can lose nothing—and gain a lot from the defeat of its "own" imperialism. It should strive for this defeat, just as the proletariat of Japan should strive for the defeat of "its" bourgeoisie.

This position met with opposition from many comrades. After re-discussing the whole issue, the editorial staff, which had not previously held a united view on the matter, revised its position, adopting the principle of "Jacobin war" also for the colonies and the United States.

What prompted us to this revision? What was our mistake?

1. For the colonial peoples, for the labor movement in the colonies, it is not indifferent whether they are under English or Nazi rule. Nazi captivity would be a hundred times worse than the present captivity by England, France, Belgium, etc. The possibility of revolutionary action would shrink to a minimum under German rule. In this respect, the colonies, in principle, are in the same position as European countries, although they cannot lose their national independence, which they do not presently have.
2. In the war with Hitler, defeat does not open the way to revolution. We see this in Europe, and there is nothing to suggest that it could be otherwise in the colonies. For example, if German troops were to stand on the Syrian border, it would be a fatal blow to the burgeoning Syrian national liberation movement.
3. The English defeat in the colonies strengthens Hitler's position in Europe.
4. The defeat of the United States in the war with Japan would reduce its aid to England, and thus strengthen Hitler.

For the above reasons, the present war, its partners and all of its fronts must be considered as a whole. Revolutionary defeatism can't, therefore, apply in any section of the war with Hitler. Everywhere the slogan of Jacobin war must be put forward.

"Jacobin" war means defending the country against fascist invasion through relentless class struggle against the internal enemy, through proletarian revolution. In other words: defending the country to gain power—gaining power to defend the country. Or to put it another way still: a simultaneous war on two fronts: on the external and home fronts. This is the historical meaning of the concept of "Jacobin war", such a war on two fronts was waged by the Jacobins of the Great Revolution.

The end includes the means. Seeking to gain power during war and as a result of war, the labor movement of states fighting against the fascist bloc should expose the imperialist nature of the war, deny confidence and credit to bourgeois governments, mobilize the masses for revolutionary struggle against these governments, proclaim the slogan of self-determination of all peoples, first of all nations subjugated by their "own" imperialism. But realizing that the victory of the proletariat is possible in the present war through the defeat of Hitler and his allies, the labor movement must take on the task of defending the country against fascism, turning the imperialist war into a revolutionary, anti-fascist war.

The essentially same tactic should apply in the colonies. War creates enormous revolutionary opportunities in Africa and Asia. In order for these possibilities to be fully exploited to thwart the inevitable compromise between the feudal aristocracy and the liberal bourgeoisie and imperialism, it is imperative that the proletariat of the leading colonial countries, through an alliance with the peasantry, set the movement on the track toward revolution.

Colonial revolutionaries, however, must follow the same principle as European revolutionaries. In the fight against the immediate enemy, no move should be made in favor of Hitler. By targeting English imperialism, the popular masses of Egypt, India, etc., should simultaneously defend their country and defend Europe against the fascist armies.

And the US proletariat should base its tactics on similar assumptions. While exposing the hideous "democratic" hypocrisy of American imperialism and fighting for its own class ends, the proletariat must not seek US military defeat on any front against Hitler and his allies.

Revolutionary [defeat]ism enslaves with its iron [*words missing*]

it excludes from the outset the possibility of any oport [*words missing*] from consistent, revolutionary internationalism [. The revolutionary de]faetism is also supported by the enormous authority of Le[nin].

The specific nature of the *present* im[perialist] war, however, compelled us to revise the old position. That [*words missing*] revision so reluctantly, with such "inconsistency", with such [*words missing*] resulted from the inevitable and to some extent justifi[ed] the con]servatism of theoretical thought. Our indecision was influen [*words missing*] fact that a decision should have been made on such an important matter without any possibility of contact with our international movement.

The revision was nevertheless carried out. We know that the tactics conditioned by concept of "Jacobin war" we have formulated is not devoid of weak links, that it contains more than one ambush and leaves open many doors for social-patriotism. The tactic we propose is as complicated as the present situation that gave rise to it. Its correct application cannot be guaranteed in advance—it will depend on the revolutionary intuition of those who will use this tactic.

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